

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 SSM-03 IO-13 /073 W
-----118082 241332Z /43

P 241215Z JAN 78
FM AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1542
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ALEXANDRIA 0062

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EG IS US
SUBJECT: LOCAL REACTION TO BREAK IN EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI PEACE
NEGOTIATIONS

SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH ALEXANDRIANS WERE SEVERELY DISAPPOINTED BECAUSE ISRAEL HAS NOT MADE THE CONCESSIONS THEY EXPECTED AND THERE HAS BEEN A BREAK IN PEACE TALKS, THEY ARE STILL FOCUSING MOST BLAME ON ISRAEL. THERE IS, HOWEVER, SOME CRITICISM OF THE U.S. FOR NOT PRESSING ISRAEL HARDER FOR CONCESSIONS, AND THIS FEELING MAY WELL GROW UNLESS FAVORABLE DEVELOPMENTS INTERVENE.

1. IN GENERAL, ALEXANDRIANS ARE SEVERELY DISAPPOINTED WITH THE BREAK IN EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. SADAT SPEECH AND NEWS MEDIA HAVE FOCUSED BLAME ON ISRAELIS, AND THIS ATTITUDE APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN WIDELY ACCEPTED. FRIENDLINESS OF ALEXANDRIANS TOWARD ISRAELIS THAT WAS EVIDENT AT BEGINNING OF TALKS APPEARS TO HAVE CHANGED CONSIDERABLY. THERE IS ALSO SOME CRITICISM OF SADAT FOR ATTACKING THE SOVIET UNION SO STRONGLY IN HIS SPEECH -- MANY FEEL THAT A GREAT POWER SHOULD NOT BE SO ADDRESSED.

2. ON THE WORKING LEVEL, RELATIONS WITH LOCAL OFFICIALS, ETC. REMAIN CLOSE, US-EGYPTIAN COOPERATION IS STILL STRONGLY SUPPORTED
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AND THERE IS AS YET NO HINT OF BLAME ON THE USG. PORTIONS OF SADAT'S SPEECH POINTING OUT THE MAGNITUDE OF THE US AID PROGRAM AND US WILLINGNESS TO ASSIST IN THE CLEARING OF THE SUEZ CANAL WERE HELPFUL HERE.

3. NEVERTHELESS, AT A MORE SOPHISTICATED LEVEL, E.G. AT THE UNIVERSITY AND AMONG HIGHER OFFICIALS, WE ARE BEGINNING TO FIND

UNEASY QUESTIONING AS TO "WHERE DOES THE PEACE EFFORT GO FROM HERE;" AND "WHAT IS THE USG GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?" THERE IS THE FEELING THAT IF THE USG WANTS TO DO SOMETHING, IT SURELY CAN. PERHAPS PUT ANOTHER WAY, THE LARGE US ARMS SHIPMENTS TO ISRAEL ARE NOTED AS PROVIDING ISRAEL THE STRENGTH, WITH WHICH IT CAN AFFORD TO BE "UNREASONABLE" ON THE SETTLEMENTS ISSUE. A SENIOR MINISTRY OF MARITIME TRANSPORT OFFICIAL, ADMIRAL SAMMAK, STRESSED EGYPT'S ISOLATION AMONG THE ARAB COUNTRIES AND HIS VIEW THAT IF THE PEACE INITIATIVE WERE TO FAIL NOW, SADAT COULD NO LONGER CONTINUE IN POWER AND EGYPT WOULD SINK INTO POLITICAL RADICALISM. IT WAS THUS UP TO THE USA TO SEE THAT THE OPPORTUNITY DID NOT PASS.

4. UNLESS THERE ARE FAVORABLE DEVELOPMENTS SOON, IT IS LIKELY THAT A GENERAL ATTITUDE MAY DEVELOP HERE, QUESTIONING THE SINCERITY OF THE U.S. IN CARRYING OUT ITS PEACEMAKING ROLE BECAUSE IT SEEMS UNWILLING TO PRESS ISRAEL HARD. MCCLELLAND

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PUBLIC ATTITUDES, DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL RECALL, PEACE TALKS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978ALEXAN00062
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780035-0534
Format: TEL
From: ALEXANDRIA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780131/aaaaazzx.tel
Line Count: 79
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 02f224e1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3728051
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LOCAL REACTION TO BREAK IN EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI PEACE NEGOTIATIONS SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH ALEXANDRIANS WERE SEVERELY DISAP
TAGS: PINT, PDEV, PGOV, EG, IS, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/02f224e1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014